

16.7 REPORT 2: DEPUTIES ECUMENICITY ABROAD – THE NETHERLANDS DESK (Artt 47, 161)

- A. Rev HS Coetzee tables the Report.
- B. The Report will be concluded during the Synod session.
- C. The chairperson, dr DG Breed, welcomes rev AH Reitsema of the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken.

D. REPORT

Deputies responsible for this desk: Revs HS Coetzee (s), MA Modise.

1. Christelike Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (CGK)

Ecumenical unity

For notice

1.1 *Mandate*

- 1.1.1 The Synod is to express its gratitude over the ecumenical unity with the CGK which has been a longstanding bond of unity in doctrine, service and discipline, regularly demonstrated at ecumenical level.
- 1.1.2 The Deputies are to, in accordance with the Synod's decisions on the relationship with Synod Soutpansberg, enter into discussion with the CGK on how their ties with Soutpansberg impact on the GKSA.
- 1.1.3 It must be endeavoured to concretely establish ecumenical unity, through e.g. contributions to the other's Synod.
- 1.1.4 Unity within the church is to be upheld and promoted by means of visitations by Deputies and collaboration, in terms of *inter alia* missionary work in Botswana.

Decision: Points 1.1.1 to 1.1.4 noted.

1.2 *Execution of the mandate*

- 1.2.1 The Deputies attended the CGK's Synod week to strengthen ties with them and other international churches. The Deputies conveyed the GKSA's greetings to their Synod and also lead services in a number of individual congregations.
- 1.2.2 Pressure from the authorities has necessitated discussion of the possible merging of theological universities in the Netherlands.
- 1.2.3 The ties with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Vrijgemaakt) and the Netherlands Reformed Church is currently receiving close attention. In quite a few places cooperation between the three churches has been fairly productive, in so-called "collaborating congregations".
- 1.2.4 Synod Soutpansberg also attended the Synod. The rift between the GKSA and Soutpansberg is a troubling matter to the CGKN, which prompted a letter from their Deputies to that of the GKSA and to Soutpansberg. The Deputies responded in kind, detailing the grounds for the decision of the GKSA. The matter was reviewed during their Synod and the reality of the rift was noted. The CGKN expressed their wish for talks to be resumed between the GKSA and Soutpansberg. The Deputies recommended that for the time being communication should occur through the Deputies Ecumenicity (abroad).

Decision: Points 1.2.1 to 1.2.4 noted.

For decision making

1.3 *Recommendations*

- 1.3.1 The Synod is to express its gratitude over the ecumenical unity with the CGK that has been a longstanding bond of unity in doctrine, service and discipline, regularly demonstrated at ecumenical level.

- 1.3.2 The Deputies are to continue, in view of developments in the relationship with Synod Soutpansberg, to communicate with the CGK about how their ties with Soutpansberg impact on the GKSA.
- 1.3.3 It must be endeavoured to concretely establish ecumenical unity, through e.g. contributions at the other's Synod.
- 1.3.4 Unity within the church is to be upheld and promoted through visits by Deputies and collaboration, in terms of *inter alia* missionary work.

Decision: Points 1.3.1 to 1.3.4 approved.

2. Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NedIGK)

For notice

2.1 *Mandate*

- 2.1.1 The Synod is to express its gratitude over the ecumenical unity with the NedIGK which has been a longstanding bond of unity in doctrine, service and discipline, regularly demonstrated at ecumenical level.
- 2.1.2 Information about missionary work and training in the mission fields of Africa and South Africa is to be obtained from both sides.
- 2.1.3 The Deputies are to assist in safeguarding the position of mission churches and ministers of the NedIGK in South Africa, in a sound ecclesiastical manner.
- 2.1.4 There must be endeavoured to concretely establish ecumenical unity, through e.g. contributions at the other's Synod.
- 2.1.5 Unity within the church is to be upheld and promoted, through visits by Deputies and through cooperation, where possible.

Decision: Points 2.1.1 to 2.1.5 noted.

2.2 *Execution of the mandate*

- 2.2.1 The Deputies strengthened the bonds with the NedIGK, in a meeting with their Deputies upon attending the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches in 2013.
- 2.2.2 The Deputies were also able to attend the rural meeting on 30 March at Zeewolle and conveyed the GKSA's greetings. The missionary work these churches continue to do in South Africa was acknowledged with thanks and it would seem that this initiative is doing well at the moment.
- 2.2.3 A visit was made to rev Fritz Kruger and his family. They seem to have settled in quite nicely in the Netherlands, fruitfully doing God's work there.

Decision: Points 2.2.1 to 2.2.3 noted.

For decision making

2.3 *Recommendations*

- 2.3.1 The unity between the GKSA and the NedIGK in doctrine, service and discipline is to be acknowledged with thanks.
- 2.3.2 The contribution of the NedIGK to the missionary work in South Africa is to be acknowledged with thanks and further promoted.
- 2.3.3 The endeavours of the NedIGK and other churches in the Netherlands to gain structural unity is to be acknowledged with thanks

Decision: Points 2.3.1 to 2.3.3 approved.

3. Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt (GKv)

Ecumenical unity

For notice

3.1 *Mandate*

- 3.1.1 The Synod is to express its gratitude over the ecumenical unity with the GK(v) which has been a longstanding bond of unity in doctrine, service and discipline, regularly demonstrated at ecumenical level.
- 3.1.2 It must be endeavoured to concretely establish ecumenical unity, through e.g. contributions at the other's Synod.

3.1.3 Unity within the church is to be upheld and promoted by means of visits by Deputies and through cooperation, where possible.

Decision: Points 3.1.1 to 3.1.3 noted.

3.2 *Execution of the mandate*

3.2.1 Ties with the GKv were strengthened, through discussions with their Deputies, at the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches in 2013 and their Synod on 29 March 2014 at Ede.

3.2.2 Participation in their international week, at which they welcomed guests from across the world, as well as discussions about their Synod's agenda and current affairs in the Netherlands were of great value. Ties with Deputies of other churches were also strengthened at this time.

3.2.3 A Deputy also led a service in the Titus Chapel – a suburban congregation in Amsterdam.

Decision: Points 3.2.1 to 3.2.3 noted.

For decision making

3.3 *Recommendations*

3.3.1 The unity between the GKSA and the GKv in doctrine, service and discipline (formally since 2006) is to be acknowledged with thanks.

3.3.2 The diligent effort of the GKv to be a church in a changed and changing society is to be acknowledging with thanks. Also that ties with them indeed enables us to consider together how we are to understand the Word of the Lord, in the time and place that the Lord calls on us to be a church.

3.3.3 Attending the international week enabled extensive contact with these churches and the Deputies of other churches and this opportunity must be utilised as much as possible in future.

Decision: Points 3.3.1 to 3.3.3 approved.

4. Protestantse Kerk in Nederland (PKN)

Ecumenical contact

For notice

4.1 *Mandate*

Keeping in contact with the PKN at ecumenical level.

Decision: Noted.

4.2 *Execution of mandate*

No formal contact was made with the PKN this term.

Decision: Noted.

For decision making

4.3 *Recommendation*

In light of the composition of the PKN and that their church ties are not centred on confessional matters, no additional ecumenical contact is to be sought with the PKN.

Ecumenical contact will, however, remain and collaboration may still be possible.

Decision: Approved.